

Aldermen stress Aurora riverwalk's importance to downtown master plan

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9/30/2017



It will take a little longer for the [Aurora](#) City Council to consider revisions to the downtown master plan, as some aldermen want the riverwalk to have a more prominent place in the document.

Aldermen on the council's Planning and Development Committee have suggested even more changes to the plan, which is now an almost two-year-old effort.

In particular, aldermen said the plan should make more direct reference to the FoxWalk riverwalk along the Fox River as it passes through downtown.

"There is no recommendation that we finish it, and I think that's an important part of the plan," said Ald. Michael Saville, 6th, Planning and Development chairman. "There is no mention of the riverwalk as being an economic generator."

Ald. Sherman Jenkins, at large, a committee member, said a rendering of the riverwalk might even be appropriate for the master plan cover. He said when a rendering of RiverEdge Park was included on the cover of another report, it helped move that project further, even though people saw it only as a dream.

"We need another vision statement," Jenkins said. "We've got to play on that. It's very, very important to have another signature thing, and to show people we haven't forgotten about that."

The new downtown master plan is an upgrade of the Seize The Future Plan done in 2005 for downtown. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, or CMAP, awarded a technical assistance grant to Aurora to help local

planners upgrade the plan.

Stephane Phifer, Aurora's Planning & Zoning director, said the collaboration between Aurora and CMAP was good because it "brought a regional viewpoint, and they were good at challenging us."

"This plan goes beyond Seize The Future by building on the successes (of that plan) and developing a community around it," Phifer said. "The plan doesn't have strict guidelines, which is exciting. It's a beginning plan, not an end."

The plan has been through several public hearings, and gained input from an online survey and survey locations throughout the city for almost two years. The Plan Commission passed it along to the City Council, where aldermen now will consider the plan and eventually vote on adopting it into the city's comprehensive plan.

Aldermen at the Planning and Development Committee decided recently to keep the plan in committee while some of their suggested changes are made. That means the earliest the committee would vote to recommend the plan would be Oct. 12, and it would not get to the full City Council for adoption until Oct. 24.

The plan does contain a number of recommendations. Many of them deal with aesthetic improvements, and identifying gateways to and from downtown. There is one recommendation that does say the city should "develop stronger visual and physical links to the riverfront."

The plan includes recommendations such as promoting and cultivating the creative, cultural identity of downtown, and identifying and activating vacant spaces.

Lindsay Bayley, CMAP project manager, agreed the plan needs more specific mention of the riverwalk. She said CMAP will continue to work with the city up to two years after adoption of the revised plan to help its implementation.

"We really found a very engaged community in Aurora," she said. "They are passionate about their downtown."

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